SECTION 6

ASSOCIATION WEBSITES

First, it is clear from the completed questionnaires that almost all language associations regard websites as an integral part of their work. Associations also use other ways of engaging in online activity, for example, sending out newsletters or opening a group page on Facebook. In the analysis of the first questionnaire in 2009, it had already become very clear that having a web presence is of major importance to the associations because websites fulfill different functions. In this chapter, expectations surrounding the functions of websites as well as possible difficulties will be examined.

1. Expectations of websites

The expectations and demands that language associations have of their websites are varied. According to the results gathered from the questionnaire in 2011:

- The website of a language teacher association must be highly informative. There should be information about the ongoing activities of the association and of related activities (such as conferences, publications, events in embassies and language centres). The website need to have comprehensive links to these to enable readers to access further information.
- Many associations send newsletters to a broader public to make their information widely available. The group of recipients can include ministries and political decision makers.
- In order for the association's website to remain interesting for members and others it is extremely important to update the information on a regular basis. This is the main way of showing current developments in the language teacher association, but also in the education system and language policy of the country concerned, and of commenting on these developments.
- It is crucial to build the website with a comprehensible and clear structure, so that people with a basic knowledge of new technologies can navigate it.
- Many associations stress that their website is especially interesting for their members because they offer both a public area which is accessible to everybody and an area exclusively for members. In this member area, the associations offer information that is of additional value to their members. This can include resources for teaching, such as concrete teaching plans, interesting news, pedagogical information, different exercises for teachers and students, or even podcasts.
- With regard to multimedia, the inclusion of pictures, as well as audio and video recordings, breaks up the websites that can sometimes be very text-based. This makes them more interesting to both members and the public. It has to be mentioned, though, that for an association to produce its own podcasts or videos is very labour-intensive.
- Many associations use their websites to disseminate the latest news through publishing their association magazine and other publications online. As had already been

mentioned in 2009, associations can save money on printing costs in this way. This can be of additional value to the paying members who get access to the publications online.

- The IDV (International German Teacher Association) mentions that many readers of its website welcome job offers there. Of course, these job offers have to be controlled by an editor in order to be appropriate to the website. Nevertheless, uploading job offers regularly on the website or in the newsletters is a clear sign of the association's ongoing activity, which brings it closer to its members and other people interested in its work.

- The word "interactive" is especially important for language teacher associations. Associations which have already managed to develop an interactive website stress the positive results, while those without an interactive website would like to build one in the near future. Interactive in this context means different things, such as offering members the possibility of forum discussions or uploading content themselves. The important point seems to be that not only the webmaster can publish content on the website, but others too. Nevertheless, the webmaster has to monitor all the information that is uploaded onto the website and which can be accessed by the public, as it is the association that takes on the responsibility for all content, regardless of its origin. In forum discussions, there is more focus on free and spontaneous discussions, but it is nevertheless advisable to have a person such as a moderator or webmaster to keep an eye on the activities.

- With regard to interactive content, it can be added that some associations have started to be active on Facebook. Facebook gives associations the opportunity to structure their interactive content and contacts, but the site has to be maintained actively by a member of the association, as regular status updates and the latest ongoing news are simply essential in a social community like Facebook. In some cases, associations are also using Twitter to disseminate short pieces of information and to highlight new items on the website, and this can feed into Facebook too.

2. Difficulties and opportunities

As stated above, the topicality of the information on the website is essential to its success. Therefore, one person in the association has to take on the responsibility for the website. The biggest problem is often that all the members in the association do voluntary and unpaid work and that the maintenance of a website is very time-consuming. Sometimes, the technical requirements of maintaining the website (depending on the system used) can be too complex for the members. In this case, the website maintenance is often outsourced to an external specialist, but this means additional costs for the association. If a member of the association takes over this position, continuity can be endangered whenever this person does not have enough time for the job (or moves away, finds a different job etc.).

Some associations mentioned the difficulty of producing multilingual websites. This means on the one hand a lot of time and effort; but, on the other hand information can be exchanged across different languages. In the end, it can safely be stated that the structure and the

topicality of a website is always determined by its budget and the work time available. Still, all associations point to the growing importance of networking via the new media and add that through these media young (and potentially new) members can be reached. Some are more ambitious still and are exploring opportunities to make working internationally across borders substantially more accessible, for example, through regular video conferences, webinars or teacher training online. In summary, all the language teacher associations work hard in order to highlight their work in the online-media and to raise their online voice and profile.

3. Some tips for language teacher association websites

The section concludes with a case study offered by the Slovenian German Teacher Association (SDUNJ) (see Case study 6.1).

The American Association of Teachers of German has also gathered tips on their website about what their own regional associations should bear in mind when they start their own websites (see http://www.aatg.org/membership/local-chapters/reports-a-websites/13-local-chapter-web-site-hosting-info.html). Naturally, its special focus lies on German in the USA, but many of these ideas can be transferred and used for building an effective and up to date website:

- Offering links to all the other important language associations, embassies, universities etc.
- Making sure that all the information regarding membership is clearly visible and offering a user-friendly application form for membership
- Having a clear imprint and showing the contact information clearly
- Making an effort to update information regarding your association regularly (for example, uploading the minutes of meetings).
- Describing the structure of your association clearly.
- Having a URL that is easy to remember.
- Offering a possibility for your members to upload their own material

4. Websites

Finally in this section about websites, all the websites of the associations which filled in the questionnaire in 2011 are named. We would like to thank them very much for their contributions, and welcome ongoing contributions to this publication.

- APPA – Associação Portuguesa de Professores de Alemão, Portugal: www.appa.pt
- American Association of Teachers of German, USA: www.aatg.org
- Arbeitskreis Deutsch als Fremdsprache/Zweitsprache, Switzerland: www.akdaf.ch
- Fransklærerforeningen, Norway: www.fransklaereren.no
- Federación de Asociaciones de Germanistas en España FAGE, Spain: www.fage.es
- Associazione Italiana di Germanistica, Italy: http://aig.humnet.unipi.it

- Malta Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (MATEFL), Malta: www.matefl.org
- British Columbia Association of Teachers of Modern Languages, Canada: www.bcatml.org
- Society for the Promotion of the Teaching of English as a Second Language in Quebec (SPEAQ), Canada: www.speaq.qc.ca
- Language Teachers' Association of Lithuania, Lithuania: www.lkpa.uki.vu.lt
- Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers, Canada: www.caslt.org
- TEA Teachers of English in Austria, Austria: www.tea4teachers.org
- Romanian Association of Teachers of English (RATE), Rumania: www.rate.org.ro
- English Language Teachers Association of Albania, Albania: http://eltaal.org
- Lärarna i moderna språk (LMS), Sweden: www.lms-riks.se
- Associação Portuguesa dos Professores de Francês (APPF), Portugal: www.appf.pt
- Félag Þýzkukennara (Der isländische Lehrerverband), Iceland: www.ki.is
- Association des enseignants de français en Suède (AEFS), Sweden: www.fransklararforeningen.com
- Türkiye Almanca Öğretmenleri Derneği (Turkish Association for German teachers): www.taod.org.tr
- American Association of Teachers of French (AATF), USA: www.frenchteachers.org
- Félag frönskukennara á Íslandi (L'Association des professeurs de français en Islande), Iceland: www.franska.is
- Association des Professeurs de Français de Malte (APFM), Malta: www.apfmalte.com/
- Lingua e Nuova Didattica (LEND), Italia: www.lend.it
- Slowenischer Deutschlehrerverband (SDUNJ), Slovenia: www.sdunj.si

CASE STUDY 6.1

CASE STUDY FROM SLOVENIA – THE WEBSITE OF THE SLOVENIAN GERMAN TEACHER ASSOCIATION (SDUNJ)

Written by Saša Podgoršek, 9th May 2011
(Translated by: Tatjana Atanasoska)

The Slovenian German Teacher Association (SDUNJ) developed a new and interactive website in 2010, www.sdunj.si. The base was the old, static website, and a group of members led by Mrs. Saša Podgoršek developed our site further. The new website is interactive and allows for active participation of all members (registration for the site is necessary).
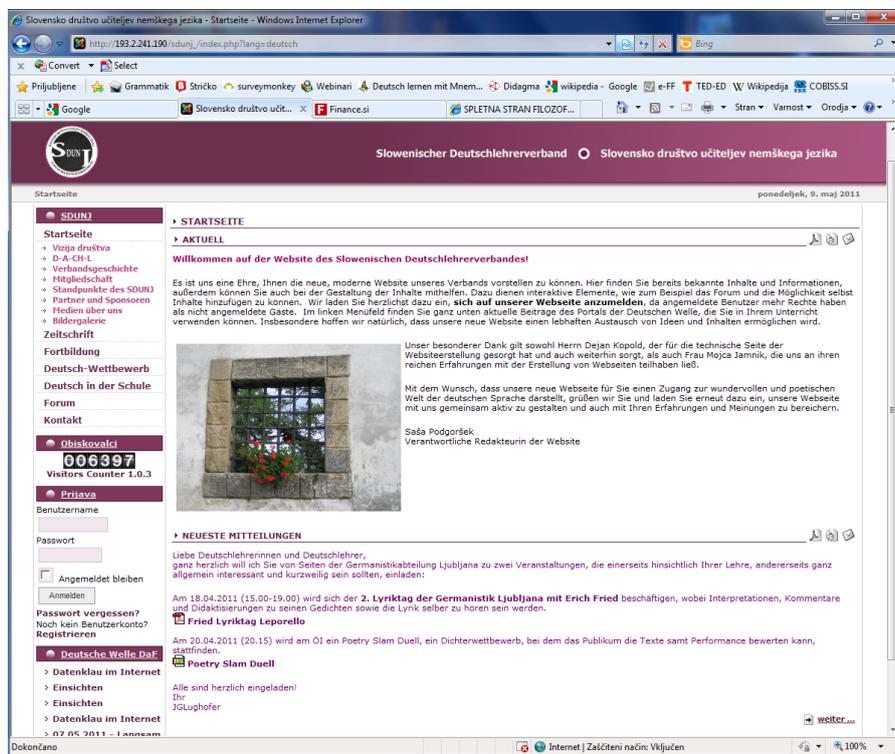
First page of the SDUNJ: www.sdunj.si

The website consists of three parts: on the right hand side is the the main content of the website, on the left there is the menu bar, and above is a smaller menu bar, giving the user the chance to choose a language. There are eight major sections on the main menu.

1. Home
2. Magazine
3. Teacher training
4. German contest
5. German in schools
6. Forum
7. Contact
8. RSS Deutsche Welle DaF

The website has been available in two languages since 2011 (Slovenian and German).

The **structure of the website** is as follows:

- Home
    - Visions of SDUNJ
    - D-A-CH-L
    - The history of the association
    - Membership info
    - SDUNJ's positions on different topics
    - Partners and sponsors
    - Media coverage of the SDUNJ
    - Picture gallery
- Magazine
    - Description of the magazine
    - Invitation to contribute
    - List of contents
    - Archive (earlier issues)
- Teacher training
    - Meetings
    - Seminars
    - IDT (Internationale Deutschlehrertagung)
- German contest
    - Competition regulations and instructions
    - Results
    - Archive
    - FAQ
- German in schools
    - Competition regulations and instructions
    - Projects of the association
    - School projects
    - Internet connections
- Forum
- Contact
- RSS Deutsche Welle DaF

The website contains all of the association's activities. The organisers of these activities write and publish their texts and information on the website themselves, which was not possible with the old, static website. This decentralised approach makes it possible to react fast, which is especially important for the German contest (publishing the results, FAQ, etc.).

The website was presented 5 November 2010 at the German teacher conference in Slovenia. Since then, we have registered 6000 website visitors. At this moment (May 2011), 56

members have been registered on the website. Visitors to the website do not only come from Slovenia, but from 31 different countries. Most of them are from Germany, Russia, Ukraine, Sweden, Austria and Croatia. The most and second-most visited site is Competition Regulations and Instructions (3897 hits) and Archive (1423 hits) in the section on the German contest.

The layout is based on a template by Joomla!, and it was designed to be especially clear. The visual identity of the website corresponds to the visual identity of the association.

The new website of the SDUNJ is now half a year old. Initial feedback has been very positive, but we still want to carry out an analysis of the website usage to be able to further improve it. Version 2 will be presented at the Slovenian German teacher conference in autumn 2011.